

# SVETLANA KURBATSKAYA ON SERIAL MUSIC: TWELVE CATEGORIES OF “TWELVE-TONENESS”\*

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Published in Moscow in 1996, Svetlana Kurbatskaya’s book *Serial Music: Questions of History, Theory, Aesthetics* [*Seriynaya muzika: voprosi istorii, teorii, estetiki*] carries the interesting distinction of being the first Russian-language monograph devoted entirely to the study of serial music.<sup>1</sup> Although the book’s circulation appears to have been fairly limited, it was written under the advice of Yuri Kholopov (1932–2003), the most prominent Russian theorist of his generation. The book provides interesting insight into a uniquely Russian understanding of what serial music “is.” In the second chapter,<sup>2</sup> Kurbatskaya defines exactly twelve different categories of what she calls “twelve-toneness” [*dvenadtsatitonovost*]. Considering this source alongside the Russian *Musical Encyclopedic Dictionary* [*Muzikal’niy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar*’, henceforth *MES*], for which Kholopov himself contributed different definitions for a number of terms that Western readers would generally consider to be essentially synonymous

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<sup>1</sup> Svetlana Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika: voprosi istorii, teorii, estetiki* (Moscow: Sfera, 1996), 2. Kurbatskaya’s claim is also supported in Peter Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions and the Politics and Practice of Soviet Serialism,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004), 353 n. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Kurbatskaya’s book is divided into ten chapters: Ch. 1, “Chronology of Twelve-Tone and Serial Music” [*Khonologiya dvenadtsatitonovoy, seriynoy muziki*], 15–31; Ch. 2, “On the System of Terminology” [*O sisteme terminologii*], 32–43; Ch. 3, “The Series and Serialism” [*Seriya. Seriynost*’], 44–123; Ch. 4, “Harmonic Forms” [*Garmonicheskie formi*], 124–175; Ch. 5, “Melodic Forms” [*Melodicheskie formi*], 176–196; Ch. 6, “New Textural Forms” [*Novi fakturnie formi*], 197–218; Ch. 7, “Counterpoint” [*Kontrapunkt*], 219–254; Ch. 8, “The Problem of Musical Forms” [*Problema muzikalnoy formi*], 255–294; Ch. 9, “Serialism and the Evolution of Twentieth-Century Music” [*Seriynost’ i evolyutsiya muziki XX veka*], 295–307; Ch. 10, “Serial Technique and the Value of Music” [*Seriynaya tekhnika i tsennost’ muziki*], 308–356.

(i.e., serial music, serial technique, dodecaphony, twelve-tone music), one can begin to accept the possibility that Russian theorists might be more restrictive in their definitions than their Western counterparts.

The importance of Kurbatskaya's work cannot be overstated for Western music theorists and musicologists studying the *avant garde* music of Russia. However, owing both to the book's language and relative inaccessibility in the United States, it has remained virtually unexplored in English-language scholarship.<sup>3</sup> The present article is in two parts. In the first, I will present a summary of the state of Russian writings on serialism prior to the publication of Kurbatskaya's book in 1996.<sup>4</sup> In the second, I will provide a thorough discussion of the second chapter of her book, which introduces her twelve categories.<sup>5</sup>

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In the foreword to her book, Kurbatskaya notes that there is a large body of significant writings on serialism from outside Russia, and she identifies some of the reasons for the apparent delay in the creation of a Russian-language monograph on the topic.

The doubtless "numerical superiority" of foreign studies speaks of the well known, sad circumstances of the Soviet epoch, when ideological dictates in musical science for a long time seriously prevented the purposeful studying of serial (as well as any other "formalistic," "incomprehensible") music. Prior to the beginning of the 1980s, publications on problems of [serialism] were extremely rare and isolated (it was not always even

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<sup>3</sup> To the best of my knowledge, Peter Schmelz provides the only English-language commentary on the book, and does so in a footnote, at that. See Schmelz "Shostakovich's 'Twelve-Tone' Compositions," 353 n. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Schmelz's book, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), addresses the history of Russian writings on serialism in some detail. See, especially, the section of his Ch. 2 titled "The Second Conservatory," 39–66. While it is not my intent to duplicate his efforts here, I will, of necessity, present some of the same information viewed through a different lens.

<sup>5</sup> My original plan for this article was to present a complete, annotated translation of Kurbatskaya's entire chapter. Unfortunately, owing to Russian copyright law, this is impossible. In an e-mail communication (11 February 2011) with the book's publisher, Sfera, I learned that the publisher only retained the copyright for five years after the book's initial publication. Following that period, the copyright reverted back to the author. Despite numerous attempts over the last several years, I have been unable to locate Kurbatskaya, and consequently I have been unable to obtain the legal permission necessary to publish a translation of the chapter.

possible to call things by their proper names. . .). Sometimes between the writing of a work and its appearance in the press, several years passed, and it is not possible to explain this only by the expensive costs of the publishing process.<sup>6</sup>

Kurbatskaya goes on to mention three Russian books that dealt with the topic to some degree: Kholopov's *Lessons in Harmony* [*Zadaniya po garmonii*] (1983); Natal'ya Sergeyevna Gulyanitskaya's *Introduction to Contemporary Harmony* [*Vvdenie v sovremennuyu garmoniyu*] (1984); and *Anton Webern* [*Anton Vebern*] (1984) co-authored by Yuri Kholopov and his sister, musicologist Valentina Kholopova.<sup>7</sup> While none of these are explicitly "about" serial music, the first two do contain "special sections" on serial techniques,<sup>8</sup> and the third, of course, deals with a single composer's approach to the serial method. Kurbatskaya notes that, with the appearance of these works, "the position changed, as if serial dodecaphony was *terra incognita* (or *musica non grata*) for domestic musicologists."<sup>9</sup>

Russian sources on serial music that predate Kurbatskaya's book fall into three categories: propagandistic articles in official publications, "unofficial" essays, and chapters in books on the broad category of twentieth-century harmony.<sup>10</sup> The first category includes writings like Grigoriy Shneyerson's *On Music Living and Dead* [*O muzike zhivoy i mertvoy*] (1960), and numerous articles from the official journal *Sovetskaya muzika*. Peter Schmelz's book *Such Freedom, If Only Musical* shows that, while the purposes of these writings ostensibly were to deride

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<sup>6</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 3–4.

<sup>7</sup> Valentina Kholopova and Yuri Kholopov, *Anton Vebern: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1984). The book is better known to Western readers in its German translation by Christoph Hellmundt, as *Anton Webern: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted, of course, that the present discussion does not deal with the assorted Western sources, legal or otherwise, that young Soviet composers were able to obtain through various channels. These materials, as well as non-printed influences (such as the impact of Glenn Gould's 1957 visit to the Soviet Union) are discussed at length in Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 45–66. Furthermore, the distinction between "unofficial" and "official" is explained in Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 20–21.

the serial method, they often backfired.<sup>11</sup> Shneyerson's book, for example, contained a number of vitriolic statements such as the following: "[Schoenberg] succeeded in confusing and destroying much in musical art, but he did not succeed in creating anything. . . . Such manifestations as dodecaphony, abstract painting, and existentialist philosophy are natural and unavoidable results of bourgeois decadence and its reactionary ideology."<sup>12</sup> But alongside such blatantly propagandistic remarks were a wide array of musical examples demonstrating a number of different serial techniques. The same is true of articles by Johannes Paul Thilman and Marcel Rubin that appeared in *Sovetskaya muzika* in the 1950s. Thilman's article, especially, contained such a detailed description of the serial method that it functioned as something of a "primer" for young composers.<sup>13</sup> Countless articles in the official press, among them Dmitri Kabalevsky's "Music and the Present [*Muzika i sovremennost'*]" (1960) and Noemi Mikhilovskaya's "Notes about the Works of the Young [*Zametki o tvorchestve molodikh*]" (1960), while not devoted exclusively to serialism, provided negative comments on any type of Western-influenced formalist writing within the Soviet Union, speaking largely in vague generalities rather than displaying any evidence of close study of specific pieces of music. When specific victims were required, these types of articles frequently turned their attention to the music of the young composers of the Moscow Conservatory, offering condescending remarks couched as words of encouragement.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 41–45.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Boris Schwarz, "Arnold Schoenberg in Soviet Russia," *Perspectives of New Music* 4/1 (1965), 92.

<sup>13</sup> See Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 42–44.

<sup>14</sup> The official criticism of composer Andrey Volkonsky's student works is especially relevant here. While the Soviet press often praised him as one of the more gifted of the young composers, other articles condemned his atonal and serial efforts. Often, these condemnations placed more blame on Volkonsky's liberal teachers (particularly Vissarion Shebalin), or simply his own youth (and, presumably, naivety), than on Volkonsky's own intentions. See Peter Schmelz, "Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings of Unofficial Music in the Soviet Union," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58/1 (2005): 148–157. Of course, this situation was not entirely without precedent, as evidenced by the official treatment of earlier Soviet composers experimenting with atonal techniques, such as the so-called "Russian Futurist" composers Nicolay Roslavets and Arthur Lourié. See Larry Sitsky, *Music of the Repressed Russian Avant-Garde, 1900–1929* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 38–59 and 87–110.

The second category is comprised of articles meant as responses to those in the first category. The writings of Russian composer Edison Denisov (1929–96) figure especially prominently in this category. Schmelz notes that Denisov was “the most prolific Soviet writer on the topic, the one who had obviously contemplated and studied serialism the most thoroughly and the most sympathetically.”<sup>15</sup> A glance at a list of his writings<sup>16</sup> reveals the following provocative titles: “For Objectivity and Fairness in the Evaluation of Contemporary Music [*Za ob’ektivnost’ i spravedlivost’ v otsenke sovremennoy muziki*]” (1965),<sup>17</sup> “Some Words about A. Webern [*Neskol’ko slov ob A. Veberne*]” (1966), “The New Techniques Are Not a Fad [*Novaya tekhnika—eto ne moda*]” (1966), “Dodecaphony and the Problems of Contemporary Compositional Techniques [*Dodekafoniya i problemi sovremennoy kompozitorskoy tekhniki*]” (1969),<sup>18</sup> and “On Some Melodic Types in Contemporary Music [*O nekotorykh tipakh melodizma v sovremennoy muzike*]” (1986).<sup>19</sup> Although “Dodecaphony and the Problems of Contemporary Compositional Techniques” is the only one of these essays that includes the description of specific serial techniques, one of the primary purposes of these articles appears to be providing a rebuttal to the official sources that claimed that serialism was an “unnatural” method of compo-

<sup>15</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 147.

<sup>16</sup> Yuri Kholopov and Valeriya Tsenova, *Edison Denisov* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1993), 237–239. This book was translated into English by Romela Kohanovskaya as *Edison Denisov: The Russian Voice in European New Music*, *Studia Slavica Musicologica* 28 (Berlin: Ernst Kuhn, 2002); see 323–329.

<sup>17</sup> This “writing” is actually a typescript of the remarks that Denisov made at a conference on contemporary music, held by the Union of Composers of the USSR in 1965. The text is found in Valeriya Tsenova, *Prostranstvo Edisona Denisova: Materiali nauchnoy konferentsii k 70-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya kompozitora* [*The Space of Edison Denisov: Proceedings of the Conference for the 70th Anniversary of the Composer’s Birth*] (Moscow: Moskovskaya gosudarstvennaya konservatoriya imeni P. I. Chaikovskogo, 1999), 22–33. In her commentary on his remarks, Tsenova notes that many of the ideas in the article are similar to those found in the later “Dodecaphony and the Problems of Contemporary Compositional Techniques” (Edison Denisov, “Dodekafoniya i problemi sovremennoy kompozitorskoy tekhniki,” *Muzika i sovremennost’* 6 [1969]: 478–525).

<sup>18</sup> Kurbatskaya singles out Denisov’s 1969 article (see n. 17) as “extremely valuable for its time, with its thoroughly developed historical and theoretical base, and the abundance of musical examples. It was published . . . only six years after it was written” (Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 4).

<sup>19</sup> In addition to these essays, Denisov also wrote analyses of a number of specific Western serial works: Webern’s *Variations*, op. 27 (1936); Schoenberg’s opera *Von Heute auf Morgen* (1929); Luigi Dallapiccola’s opera *Ulisse* (1968); and Luigi Nono’s *Il canto sospeso* (1956).

sition.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, Denisov attempts to build a case for the “naturalness” of the serial method by outlining a quasi-evolutionary path leading from the extended tonality of late Romanticism through the dissolution of tonality, to atonality, and finally (and inevitably) to serialism. In an extremely valuable *précis* of this article, Schmelz points out that, in addition to the question of serialism’s unnatural origin, Denisov also counters at least one other official criticism of the compositional technique:

One of the other official criticisms that he is explicitly countering in his thorough discussion . . . is the idea that twelve-tone music is modish, something that anyone can do, especially those without talent. . . . Denisov also took pains to discuss the negative situations that confront composers as they employ serial techniques and especially total serialism, especially the resulting problems with perceptibility that frequently arise.<sup>21</sup>

Both these explanations bear a remarkable similarity to the way Schoenberg himself dealt with the same issues. Early in his 1941 essay, “Composition with Twelve Tones (1),” we find the following claim: “The method of composing with twelve tones grew out of a necessity.”<sup>22</sup> This is echoed by Denisov’s statement that “the appearance of [dodecaphonic] techniques was the logical consequence of the development of some parts of European musical art of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: dodecaphony was not ‘devised’ by anyone, or ‘imposed’ on art.”<sup>23</sup> While Denisov does not use Schoenberg’s oft-quoted phrase “emancipation of the dissonance,” the paths to serialism described by the two composers are very similar. Additionally, Denisov’s refutation of the argument that serial composition requires no talent is reminiscent of Schoenberg’s stance on the issue:

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<sup>20</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 148.

<sup>21</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 149.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones (1),” in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), 216.

<sup>23</sup> Denisov, “Dodekafoniya i problemï,” 489–490.

The introduction of my method of composing with twelve tones does not facilitate composing; on the contrary, it makes it more difficult. Modernistically-minded beginners often think they should try it before having acquired the necessary technical equipment. This is a great mistake. The restrictions imposed on a composer by the obligation to use only one [row] in a composition are so severe that they can only be overcome by an imagination which has survived a tremendous number of adventures. Nothing is given by this method; but much is taken away.<sup>24</sup>

While Schoenberg's remarks do not mention issues of perceptibility, the underlying tone is much the same.

Schoenberg's essay is not directly cited in Denisov's article, but this does not necessarily mean that he was unfamiliar with the ideas expressed in it. Certainly, he could have been exposed to Schoenbergian ideas indirectly, through Western publications or other sources. Schmelz notes that the path to serialism traced by Denisov begins in much the same way as did the remarks Glenn Gould made from the stage at the Moscow Conservatory during a 1957 concert that Denisov attended. While Gould never uttered the phrase "twelve-tone composition" during his lecture, his remarks were clearly intended to show the underlying connections between the works he performed: excerpts from Bach's *Art of the Fugue* (1750) and *Goldberg Variations* (1742); Berg's *Sonata*, op. 1 (1908); Webern's *Variations*, op. 27 (1936); and the first and fourth movements of Krenek's *Piano Sonata*, op. 92/4 (1948).<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Denisov's article does cite Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony* (although it is unclear what version of this book he had in his possession) and Hanns Eisler's *Reden und Aufsätzen* (1959), and it mentions the titles of three books by René Leibowitz (*Schönberg et son école* [1946], *Introduction à la musique de douze sons* [1949], and *Histoire de l'opéra* [1957]). While it may be impossible to

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<sup>24</sup> Schoenberg, "Composition with Twelve Tones (1)," 223.

<sup>25</sup> For a fuller account of Gould's performance in Moscow, see Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 55–59.

trace Denisov's familiarity with Schoenberg's ideas to one single source, it seems irrefutable that some familiarity did exist.

This second category of apparently "reactionary" articles is also connected to the first category in its expression of non-Western understandings of what could be considered fundamentals of the serial method. Thilman's article describes "rotation," "interpolation," and "substitution" alongside Schoenberg's traditional three mirror forms (inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion).<sup>26</sup> Denisov also observes that, in serial compositions, the row can be divided into segments that can be used independently, but will always maintain their connection to the original series.<sup>27</sup> Both of these articles present as primary serial techniques a number of row manipulations that are fundamentally non-Schoenbergian.

The third category of Russian writings on serialism that pre-date Kurbatskaya's book includes monographs with individual chapters devoted to the subject. While a thorough survey encompassing all such books is beyond the scope of the present article, I will mention a representative example. Natal'ya Gulyanitskaya's *Introduction to Contemporary Harmony* (1984) has chapters devoted to the following topics: chords [*akkordika*], modality [*modal'nost'*], tonality [*tonal'nost'*], atonality [*atonal'nost'*], and serialism [*seriynost'*].<sup>28</sup> At fifty-three pages in length, the chapter on serialism represents the longest treatment of the topic we have discussed thus far. Most of the chapter, however, treads over already-covered ground. Gulyanitskaya draws most of her examples from familiar works from the Second Viennese repertoire, but she also includes

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<sup>26</sup> This information is summarized from Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 43. Schmelz speculates that these operations may come from a familiarity with Krenek's writings on serialism, as well as his choral work, *Lamentatio Jeremiae Prophetae* (1942).

<sup>27</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 149.

<sup>28</sup> Gulyanitskaya's book is divided into six chapters: Ch. 1, "Introduction" [*Vvodnaya*], 6–21; Ch. 2, "Chords" [*Akkordika*], 22–66; Ch. 3, "Modality" [*Modal'nost'*], 67–113; Ch. 4, "Tonality" [*Tonal'nost'*], 114–159; Ch. 5, "Atonality" [*Atonal'nost'*], 160–193; and Ch. 6, "Serialism" [*Seriynost'*], 194–246.



excerpts from some Soviet and eastern European composers such as Denisov, Witold Lutosławski, Alfred Schnittke, Kara Karaev, Bogusław Schaeffer, and Rodion Shchedrin. The chapter is divided into eight sections with the following titles:

1. Preliminary Information [*Predvaritel'nye svedeniya*]
2. The Series and Its Purpose in the Composition [*Seriya i yeyo naznachenie v kompozitsii*]
3. The Structure and Ordering of the Series [*Struktura i sistematizatsiya seriy*]
4. Serial Forms and Transposition [*Seriynie formi i transpozitsii*]
5. Questions of Texture and Form [*Voprosi fakturi i formi*]
6. 12-Tone Harmony [*12-tonovaya garmoniya*]
7. Combinatorics of the Units of Harmonic Language in Serial Compositions [*Kombinatorika edinit garmonicheskogo yazika v seriynikh kompozitsiyakh*]
8. Methodological Recommendations [*Metodicheskiye rekomendatsii*]

Of these titles, the seventh stands out for use of the word “combinatorics” (*kombinatorika*). However, it is important to note that, in this section, Gulyanitskaya does not discuss “combinatoriality,” with the Babbittian connotations the word evokes for Western readers. The section deals with simultaneous combinations of different row forms, regardless of whether or not these combinations result in new aggregates.<sup>29</sup>

The preceding discussion of the three categories of Russian serial scholarship, while incomplete, gives us some sense of the state of research prior to Kurbatskaya’s monograph. Although authors like Denisov, Gulyanitskaya, and the various contributors to *Sovetskaya muzika* provided explanations and critiques of different aspects of the topic, Kurbatskaya’s book offers the most thorough discussion of the nature of serialism.

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<sup>29</sup> Gulyanitskaya’s discussion of combinatorics begins with several examples from Webern’s Piano Variations, op. 27, and demonstrates strong similarities to Denisov’s analysis of the vertical aspects of this composition (see Edison Denisov, “Variatsii op. 27 dlya fortepiano A. Veberna” [“Variations op. 27 for Piano by A. Webern”], *Collage* 9 [1970]: 46–71).



nized around any sort of ordered completion of the total chromatic, and was written at least sixteen years before Schoenberg's first completely serial movement.<sup>32</sup> This excerpt, at least, appears to be better described as organized around transformations of the opening motto, C<sup>#</sup>–C–E (labeled *x* in Figure 1); it might find itself comfortably at home in an introductory course on post-tonal analysis, as an example of a composition based primarily on transformations of [014]. While it may seem strange to a Western theorist to call this movement “serial,” Kurbatskaya's statement must be understood as representing a different definition of the word “serialism.”

In the *MES*, we are confronted with several terms that Western theorists would generally use more or less interchangeably: serialism [*serial'nost'*], serial technique [*seriynaya tekhnika*], and dodecaphony [*dodekafoniya*]. All these definitions were written by Yuri Kholopov.<sup>33</sup> As these terms also appear in Kurbatskaya's book, I will delay specific discussion of their definitions for the moment; at present, it is enough to understand that these terms are defined differently from one another in the *MES*.

There is an additional relevant Russian term for which no exact English translation exists, encompassing all of the terms in the previous paragraph, and others: *dvenadtsatitonovost'*, which is most closely translated as “twelve-toneness.” In an essay analyzing aspects of Andrey Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta* (1956–57), Schmelz credits Kholopov with coining this term, which is used to describe “atonal music that sounds twelve-tone.”<sup>34</sup> In the *MES*, Kholopov defines the term in a

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instead to label them simply as *p* or *ri*; and (2) she identifies an additional transformation of *x* in mm. 3–4 by considering the first violin's C<sup>#</sup> to be the conclusion of the second violin's A–G<sup>#</sup>. (See Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 56.)

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Whittall identifies the Suite for Piano, op. 25 (1923) as Schoenberg's first completely serial composition (Whittall, *The Cambridge Introduction to Serialism* [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008], 31).

<sup>33</sup> Yuri Kholopov, “Serial'nost',” “Seriynaya tekhnika,” and “Dodekafoniya,” in *Muzikal'niy entsiklopedicheskiy solvar'* (Moscow: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1990), 493–494, 494, and 178 (respectively).

<sup>34</sup> Schmelz, “Shostakovich's ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions,” 325.

somewhat more global sense:

Twelve-toneness [*dvenadtsatitonovost'*] (dodecatonicism [*dodekatonika*], twelve-tone harmony [*dvenadtsatitonovaya garmoniya*])—a kind of twelve-step sonic system where each sound can function as an independent element. Twelve-toneness is connected with many new types of techniques in the music of the twentieth century—symmetrical harmonies (for example, in I. F. Stravinsky, O. Messiaen), “synthetic chords” (A. Roslavets), dodecaphony, tropes (J. M. Hauer), 12-tone rows (...for example in D. D. Shostakovich, R. K. Shchedrin), 12-tone fields, 12-tone chords . . . , free atonality and other models of the 12-tone field.<sup>35</sup>

Kurbatskaya, herself a former Kholopov student, adopts this term in its broader sense.<sup>36</sup>

In her book, twelve-toneness is an over-arching concept of which she defines twelve specific varieties. As defined in Chapter 2, these twelve categories are as follows:

1. “Free atonality” [*Svobodnaya atonal'nost'*]
2. Technique of tonal centers [*Tekhnika zvukovogo tsentra*]
3. Technique of “synthetic chords” [*Tekhnika “sintetakkordov”*]
4. Twelve-note chords [*12-zvukoviye akkordi*]
5. Technique of twelve-tone rows [*Tekhnika 12-tonovikh ryadov*]
6. Technique of twelve-tone fields [*Tekhnika 12-tonovikh poley*]
7. Technique of tropes [*Tekhnika tropov*]
8. Serial technique [*Seriynaya tekhnika*]
9. Dodecaphony [*Dodekafoniya*]
10. Microserialism [*Mikroseriynost'*]
11. Total serialism [*Serializm*]
12. Serialism [*Seriynost'*]

The general structure of Kurbatskaya’s chapter seems to owe a debt to George Perle’s *Serial Composition and Atonality* (the 1968 second edition of which is cited by Kurbatskaya). The manner in which she proceeds through the definitions of her twelve categories of twelve-toneness is not unlike the organization of the second and third chapters of Perle’s book.

<sup>35</sup> Yuri Kholopov, “Dvenadtsatitonovost’,” in *Muzikal'nïy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'* (Moscow: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1990), 164.

<sup>36</sup> Kurbatskaya and Kholopov also authored a book together that presents analyses of selected pieces by Pierre Boulez and Edison Denisov. See Svetlana Kurbatskaya and Yuri Kholopov, *P'yer Bulez—Edison Denisov: Analiticheskiye ocherki* [*Pierre Boulez, Edison Denisov: Analytical Essays*] (Moscow: Sfera, 1998).

Specifically, the order in which Kurbatskaya presents her first three topics is the same as in Perle's book, and she even cites several of the same examples, such as Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909), Skryabin's Piano Sonata No. 7 (1911), and Roslavets' Three Compositions for Piano (1914).<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Perle's manner of dividing his chapter "Motivic Functions of the Set" into subsections titled "The Set As a Theme," "The Set As a Melodic Prototype," and "Segmentation,"<sup>38</sup> is echoed to some degree by Kurbatskaya, who, as we shall see, takes care to note whether the series is treated as a melodic device or not, and whether or not the series is treated as a single, whole unit, or as a collection of smaller parts.



While a translation of the entire text of Kurbatskaya's Chapter 2, "On the System of Terminology" [*O sisteme terminologii*], is not permissible at present,<sup>39</sup> a summary with general notes and commentary will follow.

As the preceding discussion shows, the two-fold purpose of Kurbatskaya's chapter is first to define twelve-toneness, and second to define the twelve different categories that fall under its umbrella. Her definition of twelve-toneness does not differ significantly different from Kholopov's: "Twelve-toneness is a property of the musical material according to which each of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale can be used as independent units of the musical fabric."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See George Perle, *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), 19; see also Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 32. *Erwartung* is discussed by both authors, although Kurbatskaya mentions the work only by title (without a detailed musical example), having already directed the reader to Perle's book in the first footnote of the chapter. Both authors give identical examples from Skryabin's Piano Sonata No. 7 (see p. 43 in Perle's book, and p. 34 in Kurbatskaya's). Finally, Perle discusses Roslavets' Three Compositions on pp. 43–44, and Kurbatskaya cites the same work (again, without a detailed musical example) on p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> The reader is reminded that Perle uses the word "set" for what we have been calling a "series."

<sup>39</sup> See n. 5, above.

<sup>40</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 32.

The phrase “musical fabric” [*tkan*’] is one that Kurbatskaya uses frequently in this chapter, often in relation to whether or not a particular compositional device is responsible for “the entire musical fabric” [*vsya tkan*’], or every note on the musical surface.

In the chapter’s introductory section, Kurbatskaya links the concept of twelve-toneness with another term from Kholopov’s *MES*: dodecatonicism. The way the term is presented in both Kurbatskaya’s chapter and Kholopov’s definition suggests that these authors consider it to be synonymous with twelve-toneness: it is enclosed in parentheses, with no explanation, after the word “twelve-toneness.” Kurbatskaya writes that “twelve-toneness (dodecatonicism, twelve-tone harmony) is the system of thinking based on the autonomy of each of the twelve pitch classes,”<sup>41</sup> and thereby associates dodecatonicism and twelve-tone harmony with twelve-toneness, in the same manner of Kholopov’s definition (quoted earlier). In an essay titled “After Prokofiev,” Schmelz provides a bit more detail on the origin of this term. His research traces the word to a 1965 article by Soviet musicologist Arnold Sokhor, titled “On the Nature and Expressive Possibilities of Diatonicism.” Sokhor’s new word was intended to account for the expanded diatonic features of Prokofiev’s music, which, by having a similar appearance to the word dodecaphony, allowed Sokhor “to portray Prokofiev as a fundamentally tonal composer whose works offered either a substitute or complement to Schoenberg’s system.”<sup>42</sup> Kholopov and Kurbatskaya’s apparent connection of this word to twelve-toneness seems to indicate that these authors allow for an understanding of twelve-toneness in a tonal context, as well.

In order to consider the similarities among and differences between Kurbatskaya’s twelve categories of twelve-toneness, I shall first present her own definitions of each category:

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<sup>41</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Schmelz, “After Prokofiev,” in *Sergey Prokofiev and His World*, ed. Simon Morrison (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008), 515.

1. “Free atonality”—a special type of pitch-class organization [*visotnaya organizatsiya*] that does not reflect the standards of classical major and minor tonality, or, in general, the centralizing action of a single foundation pitch [*yedinoe ustoy*—i.e., tonic pitch].<sup>43</sup>
2. Technique of tonal centers—systems fashioned from the functional connections between dissonant sonic elements on the basis of an individually selected simultaneity [*sozvuchiye*].<sup>44</sup>
3. Technique of “synthetic chords” (N. Roslavets’ term)—a version of the technique of tonal centers (#2), where a chord [*gruppа zvukov*] functions as the source of vertical and horizontal material (in the work, or parts thereof).<sup>45</sup>
4. Twelve-note chords—-independent chords (polychords) made up of all twelve pitch classes with or without repetitions (A. Berg, *Five Orchestral Songs*, Op. 4, no. 3; A. Webern, *Orchestral Piece* Op. 6, no. 5).<sup>46</sup>
5. Technique of twelve-tone rows [*12-tonoviyе ryadi*]—A row is the horizontal occurrence of non-repeating pitch classes (or, at least, with minimally repeating [pitch classes]), which is used as a melodic construction and is not the sole source of the musical fabric.<sup>47</sup>
6. Technique of twelve-tone fields (Nikolai Obukhov, *Liturgical Poems on Texts by K. Balmont*; A. Webern *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 9)—a twelve-note semitonal field [*12-zvukovoye polutonovoye pole*] is “the set of twelve pitch classes (without or with repetitions), distributed vertically and horizontally” (Kholopov 1983, p. 216). It concerns a special type of a twelve-tone harmonic system, where the sonic structures are formed in a mixed measurement (along a vertical line, horizontal, and also diagonal), systematically filling in the chromatic space.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 32.

<sup>44</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 34.

<sup>47</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 34.

<sup>48</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 35. The reference is to Yuri Kholopov, *Zadaniya po garmonii: Uchebnoe posobie dlya studentov kompozitorsikh otdeleniy muzikal'nikh vuzov* [*Lessons in Harmony: A Textbook for Students of Music Composition in Departments of Universities*] (Moscow: Muzika, 1983), 216.

7. Technique of tropes (in the music theoretical system of J.M. Hauer)—a form of twelve-tone composition based on dividing the twelve pitch classes into two hexachords (all in all, there are 44 possible tropes).<sup>49</sup>
8. Serial technique [*seriynaya tekhnika*]—one of the forms of contemporary musical composition where the entire musical fabric is derived from an invariant series and its continuous recurrences (in basic and derived forms).<sup>50</sup>
9. Dodecaphony—a type of serial technique in which the entire musical fabric is derived from a twelve-tone series.<sup>51</sup>
10. Microserialism—a type of serial technique in which the source (invariant) of the musical fabric is a microseries, that is, a series of fewer than twelve pitch classes.<sup>52</sup>
11. Total Serialism (serial technique) [*serializm*]—the method of creating music by means of a series of two or more parameters.<sup>53</sup>
12. Serialism [*seriynost'*]
  - (a) In the twelve-tone system, the principle of pitch-class organization in which all music, without exception, is derived from an initial sequence of non-repeating pitch classes.
  - (b) The principle of musical thought by a series (or multiple series) [*serii*].<sup>54</sup>

Kurbatskaya's twelve categories of twelve-toneness group themselves as follows: #3 (technique of “synthetic chords”) is “a version of” #2 (technique of tonal centers);<sup>55</sup> #9 (dodecaphony) and #10 (microserialism) are each “a type of” #8 (serial technique).<sup>56</sup> We can also group together the categories that are related to the specific compositional procedure of an indi-

<sup>49</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 36.

<sup>51</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 38.

<sup>53</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 39–40.

<sup>55</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 37, 38.



vidual composer: #2 (technique of tonal centers) refers to the technique of Skryabin, #3 (technique of “synthetic chords”) describes the technique of Nikolay Roslavets, #6 (technique of twelve-tone fields) references Nikolay Obukhov’s concept of “total harmony,” and #7 (technique of tropes) is based on the method of Hauer. These relationships are shown in Figure 2.<sup>57</sup>

The definitions of several of Kurbatskaya’s categories are self-evident to the Western reader. Specifically, her definition of “free atonality,” twelve-note chords, and total serialism are not significantly different than their Western counterparts. Even so, a few brief comments on these concepts are in order. In the section on “free atonality,” Kurbatskaya mentions the “hemitonic . . . method of symmetrical interval groups.”<sup>58</sup> The hemitonic method is described in Kholopov and Tsenova’s 1993 book on Denisov, though it appears to date back to Valentina Kholopova’s 1973 article, “Toward One Chromatic Principle in Twentieth-Century Music.”<sup>59</sup> A full description of the theory of hemitonic groups is neither necessary for, nor within the scope of, the present article; but it can be summarized as an analytical approach that considers combinations of interval-class 1 with itself or with other interval classes.<sup>60</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova thus define two categories of hemigroups (short for “hemitonic groups”): “1. a semitone with a semitone (coupling: 1+1+ . . .) and 2. a semitone with other intervals (1+n).”<sup>61</sup>

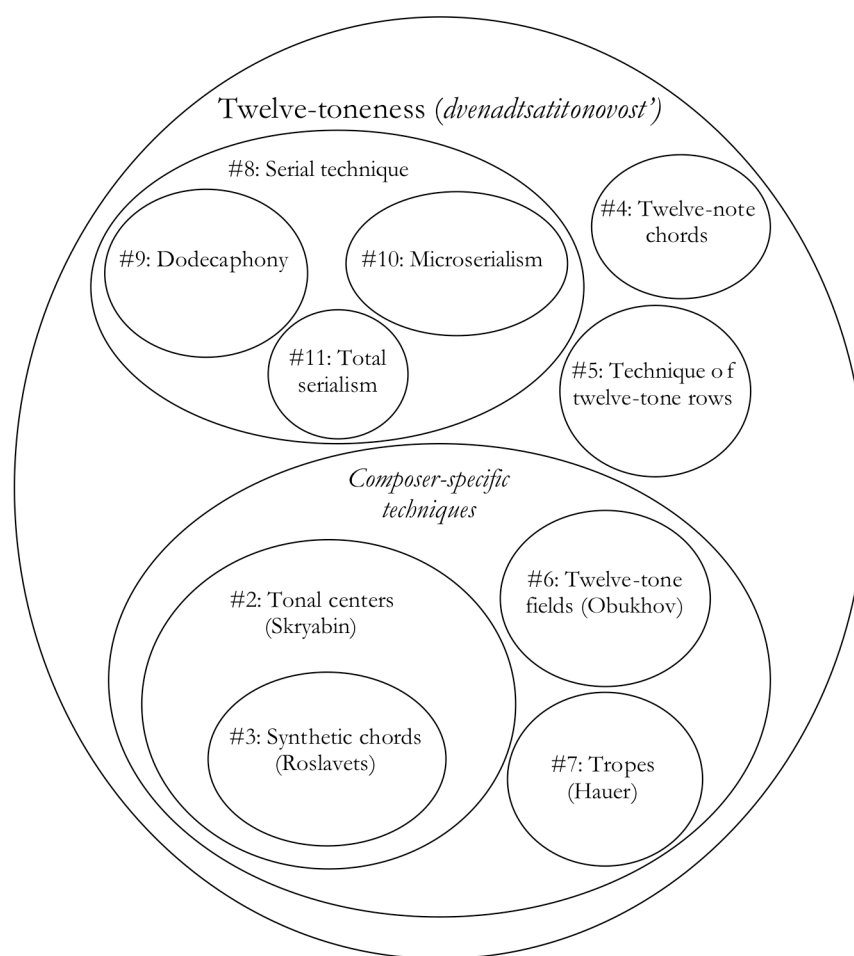
<sup>57</sup> Categories #1 and #12 are missing from this diagram because they are not defined as “techniques” in the same sense as are categories #2–#11.

<sup>58</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 32.

<sup>59</sup> Valentina Kholopova, “Ob odnom printsipe khromatiki v muzike XX veka” [“On One Principle of Chromaticism in Twentieth-Century Music”], *Problemy muzikal’noy nauki* 2 (1973): 331–344.

<sup>60</sup> An extremely helpful and thorough English-language summary of Kholopova’s method of hemitonic analysis has been offered in Philip Ewell, “A Hemitonic Approach to the Atonal Music of Anton Webern,” paper presented at Music Theory Midwest, University of Nebraska, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Kholopov and Tsenova, *Edison Denisov* (Kohanovskaya trans.), 112. This section is not present in the original Russian version of this book. Rather, it appears to have been inserted from Kholopov’s contribution to a *Festschrift* created in honor of the composer’s sixty-fifth birthday. See Yuri Kholopov, “Dvenadtsatitonoost’ u kontsa veka: Musika Edisona Denisova” [“Twelve-toneness at the End of the Century: The Music of Edison Denisov”], in *Musika Edisona Denisova: Materiali nauchnoy konferentsii, posvyashchennoy 65-letiyu kompozitora*, ed. Valeriya Tsenova (Moscow: Moskovskaya gosudarstvennaya konservatoriya imeni P. I. Chaikovskogo, 1995): 76–94.

**FIGURE 2.** Relationships among Kurbatskaya's categories

This section also lists, by title or opus number, five different pieces that can be considered as representative examples of music featuring a freely atonal type of twelve-toneness. However, Kurbatskaya only provides an annotated musical example for one of these five pieces: Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* Op. 10, no. 3 (1913). Her example is reprinted here as Figure 3. Unfortunately, her text explanation of this particular musical example leaves much to be desired. She remarks that “the opening section of Piece No. 3 (Op. 10) rests on a thirteen-note complex (eleven different pitch classes), including homogeneous groups that are distributed between a melody and a chordal ‘background.’”<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 32.

FIGURE 3. Excerpt from Webern, op. 10/3 (from Kurbatskaya)

*Sehr langsam und äusserst ruhig*

The musical score is written for a chamber ensemble. The top staff is for Arm., Mand., Git., and Od., marked *ppp* and *dim.*. The second staff is for Arpa, marked *ppp* and *dim.*. The third staff is for C-celo, marked *kaum hörbar* and *vertlingend*. The fourth staff is for C-ne basso, marked *kaum hörbar* and *vertlingend*. The fifth staff is for Cassa, marked *kaum hörbar* and *vertlingend*. The sixth staff is for V-no, marked *pp dolce* and *pp*. The seventh staff is for Cor., marked *concord. pp espress.*. The bottom staff shows a six-note chord labeled "background (fon)" and a group of seven quarter-notes labeled "melody (melodiya)".

This example seems to be emphasizing the concept of (near) pitch-class complementation. The bottom staff of the example shows the two primary elements of the musical fabric: a six-note chord labeled “background” [*fon*], and a group of seven quarter-notes played by violin and horn, labeled “melody” [*melodiya*]. The melody contains seven pitch classes that are almost entirely distinct from the six pitch classes in the accompanying background (the pitch classes D and A $\flat$ /G $\sharp$  are common to both groups). Although these two musical elements do not form the full chromatic aggregate when taken together, the idea of primarily non-intersecting pitch-class sets appears to be at the heart of Kurbatskaya’s example.

In addition, the bottom staff of the example shows the generative interval classes of both the background chord and the melody. Beginning with the background chord and progressing to the melody, Kurbatskaya labels the eleven distinct pitch classes, clearly revealing the common pitch classes and making the absence of pitch-class G obvious. Notes 1–6 are stemmed together and labeled with a “4” above the beam, which, of course, is the interval class formed by G<sup>#</sup> and E. Within this ic4, the hexachord is divided into the interval patterns <14> and <42>. Notes 7–10 are stemmed together and labeled as forming ic5, which is further divided into the interval pattern <151>. This interval pattern is nearly continued, as the final three notes in the example form the pattern <15>. With this diagram, Kurbatskaya is trying to make the point that the background is built primarily out of ic4, and the melody is built out of a combination of ic1 and ic5.

Total serialism is another of Kurbatskaya’s categories that resonates with Western musicians. Following Schmelz, I have translated Kurbatskaya’s word *seriynost*’ as “serialism,” even though the suffix *-nost*’ suggests that “serialness” might be a more literal translation. I have translated Kurbatskaya’s term for this technique, *serializm*, as “total serialism,” in order to avoid any confusion with the Western word “serialism.”<sup>63</sup> Based on the definitions given, it is clear that Kurbatskaya’s *seriynost*’ is meant in a more wide-ranging sense than is *serializm*. Accordingly, I will refer to these two terms by their familiar Western counterparts: “serialism” and “total serialism,” respectively.

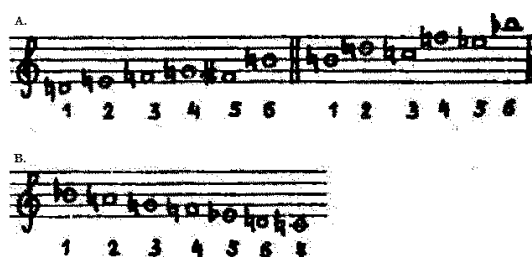
Category #10, microserialism, deserves special attention. It is this category that allows Kurbatskaya to make the claim noted earlier that Webern’s “C<sup>#</sup>–C–E” quartet represents the earliest instance of serial organization.<sup>64</sup> She defines a microseries as a “series of fewer than

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<sup>63</sup> Schmelz, “Shostakovich’s ‘Twelve-Tone’ Compositions,” 353 n. 49.

<sup>64</sup> See note 30.

**FIGURE 4.** Microseries used in (a) Stravinsky's *Agon*, and (b) Britten's *Symphony for Cello and Orchestra* (from Kurbatskaya)



twelve pitch classes.”<sup>65</sup> In addition to the Webern quartet, she also cites two *Bransle* dances from Stravinsky's *Agon* (1957)<sup>66</sup> and the same composer's *In Memoriam Dylan Thomas* (1954), and Britten's *Symphony for Cello and Orchestra* (1963). The microseries used in *Agon* and the *Symphony for Cello* are shown in Figure 4.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Kurbatskaya's discussion of microserialism is her advancement of three distinct but related terms. The terms microseries [*mikroserii*], incomplete series [*nepolnaya seriya*], and subseries [*subseriya*] all relate “to the ordering of a small number of pitch classes,”<sup>67</sup> but all have slightly different meanings. Of the three, a microseries appears to be the only one that is a complete unit in itself. Kurbatskaya says that an incomplete series is “part [*chast'*] of a complete twelve-tone series, which functions independently [of the complete series] in a specific section of the work.”<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, a subseries is a “segment [*segment*] of a series, which functions as a series on a micro-level.”<sup>69</sup> At a glance, these terms appear to be synonymous, or possibly even circular, but Kurbatskaya treats the words “part” and

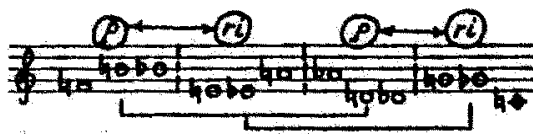
<sup>65</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 38.

<sup>66</sup> Kurbatskaya refers to “two *Bransle* dances from the ballet ‘*Agon*.’” It is curious that Kurbatskaya only mentions “two *Bransle* dances” when there are, in fact, three such dances in *Agon*: *Bransle Simple*, *Bransle Gay*, and *Bransle Double*. From the musical example she gives of the series of “two *Bransle* dances,” it is clear that she is referring to the *Bransle Simple* and the *Bransle Gay*.

<sup>67</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 38.

<sup>69</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 38.

**FIGURE 5.** Subseries technique in Lutosławski's *Funeral Music* (from Kurbatskaya)

“segment” differently: the former has more of a top-down connotation, while the latter implies a more bottom-up perspective. Specifically, the concept of an incomplete series views the whole series as the given entity, and the very existence of the “part” of it that is used independently depends on the existence of the series as a whole. The concept of a subseries, however, takes the “segment” as the generative unit, from which a larger series (twelve-note or otherwise) is built through various transformations. Kurbatskaya cites no particular examples of incomplete series, although to cite one familiar Russian example would not have been difficult: the third movement of Denisov’s cantata, *The Sun of the Incas* (1964), offers a clear example of this, as the entire movement is based entirely on transformations of the first hexachord of the row established in the first movement. As an example of a subseries, Kurbatskaya cites perhaps the most famous example of the technique: the [014]-derived row from Webern’s *Concerto for Nine Instruments*, op. 24 (1934). She also cites the row from Lutosławski’s *Funeral Music* (1958) in this category.<sup>70</sup> Her depiction of the subseries technique underlying Lutosławski’s row is shown as Figure 5.

As mentioned previously, the most important aspect of Kurbatskaya’s categories lies in the careful distinction she makes between four concepts that appear to be essentially synonymous to Western readers. These concepts are her fifth, eighth, ninth, and twelfth categories: technique of twelve-tone rows, serial technique, dodecaphony, and serialism. It is in the defini-

<sup>70</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 39.

tions of these four types of twelve-toneness that Kurbatskaya's debt to Kholopov is the most clear: there are no notable differences between Kholopov's definitions of these terms in the *MES* and Kurbatskaya's definitions in her monograph. Underlying her discussion of these concepts is a cautious differentiation of the following two pairs of terms: "twelve-tone composition" and "dodecaphony," and "series" [*seriya*] and "row" [*ryad*]. "Twelve-tone composition" is meant as a general term, referring to a "system of thought," while "dodecaphony" is a more specific "method of composition."<sup>71</sup> Her differentiation between "series" and "row" is much like the German-language distinction between *Zwölftonmusik* and *Zwölftontechnik*. A series is an organizational principle that "determines the appearance of relationships in the work."<sup>72</sup> In contrast, a row is primarily a melodic phenomenon: a row is a "horizontally presented series."<sup>73</sup>

The fifth category, the technique of twelve-tone rows, begins first with a definition of "row." In Kurbatskaya's words, "a row is the horizontal occurrence of non-repeating pitch classes . . . which is used as a melodic construction and is not the sole source of the musical fabric."<sup>74</sup> In a footnote, she observes the curiosity that melodies meeting her criteria have appeared in pre-twentieth century music as well, citing the subject from the B-minor fugue in J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I (1722) and the introductory theme from Liszt's *Faust Symphony* (1857). While it is clear that she is not trying to imply that these pieces are based on the technique of twelve-tone rows, they nonetheless meet the criteria established in her definition of the technique: the "row" is found as a melodic construction, and—although transformations of that row may be used (particularly in Bach's B-minor fugue)—the row is "not the sole source" of

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<sup>71</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 36.

<sup>74</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 34.

FIGURE 6. Twelve-tone rows in (a) Berg, op. 4/5; (b) Shchedrin, *Polyphonic Notebook*; and (c) Shostakovich, Symphony No. 14 (from Kurbatskaya)



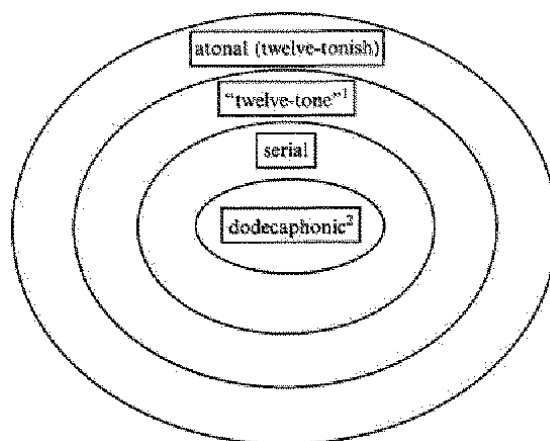
the musical material. She also cites three *bona fide* examples of the technique of twelve-tone rows: the last of Alban Berg's *Altenberg Lieder*, op. 4 (1912); Rodion Shchedrin's *Polyphonic Notebook* (1972); and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 (1969). These rows are shown in Figure 6. The inclusion of these particular examples demonstrates the significance of her claim that the row is not the sole source of all pitch-class material. The importance of this claim cannot be overstated for an understanding of the serial practices of composers like Volkonsky and Denisov, who frequently combined row-based and non-row-based music, and on occasions even used multiple rows to create their musical fabric.<sup>75</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Kurbatskaya defines dodecaphony (category #9) as a specific type of serial technique (category #8). Schmelz's "Soviet serial bull's-eye" diagram, shown in Figure 7, is helpful in understanding the relationship between these two categories. Dodecaphony, then,

<sup>75</sup> For more details on this (particularly on Denisov's use of multiple rows), see Zachary Cairns, *Multiple-Row Serialism in Three Works by Edison Denisov* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Rochester, 2010).



**FIGURE 7.** Peter Schmelz's "Soviet Serial Bull's-Eye" Diagram  
(from Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 135)



<sup>1</sup> "Non-serial dodecaphony": uses multiple twelve-tone rows that do not determine every note in the composition.

<sup>2</sup> Uses a single row of twelve pitches that governs the entire piece.

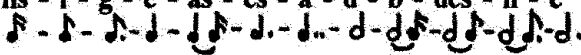
is a specific type of serial technique where the series contains exactly twelve pitch classes.

Distinguishing between the technique of twelve-tone rows and serial technique requires the invocation of Kurbatskaya's distinction between row and series. Essentially, one can arrive at Kurbatskaya's definition of serial technique by starting with the definition of the technique of twelve-tone rows, changing "twelve-tone row" to "series," and adding the requirement that the series be the source of the *entire* pitch fabric. As Kurbatskaya says, serial technique is "one of the forms of contemporary musical composition where the entire musical fabric is derived from an invariant [*invarianta*] series and its continuous recurrences (in basic and derived forms)."<sup>76</sup>

Kurbatskaya closes her chapter by discussing "serialism" [*seriynost'*] as category #12. As she defines it, serialism is really a different sort of category than the preceding eleven. It is clear that she considers serialism to be a wider-ranging phenomenon than any of the other categories she has discussed. She claims that serialism is "one of the universal categories of musical

<sup>76</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 36.

FIGURE 8. Four series from Messiaen's *Île de feu* (from Kurbatskaya)

<b>высота</b>	<b>fis - f - g - e - as - es - a - d - b - des - h - c</b>	pitch classes ( <i>visota</i> )
<b>ритм</b>		rhythm ( <i>ritm</i> )
<b>динамика</b>	$p$ - $mf$ - $f$ - $ff$ - $fff$	dynamics ( <i>dinamika</i> )
<b>артикуляция</b>	[ <i>ord.</i> ] - ( <i>legato</i> ) - ( <i>pōriām.</i> ) - ( <i>acc.</i> ) - ( <i>acc. stacc.</i> )	articulations ( <i>artikulyatsiya</i> )

12  
5

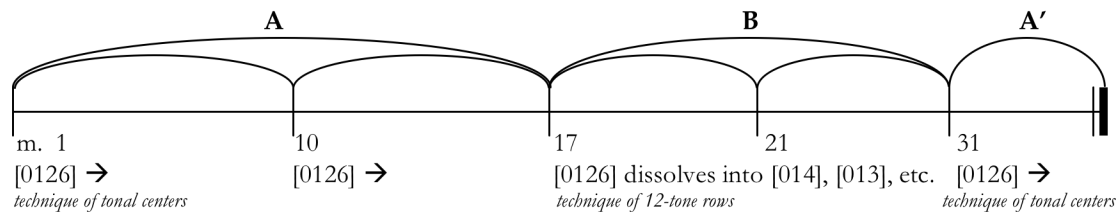
thought in the twentieth century, applied to a wide range of genetically related phenomena.”<sup>77</sup>

She gives a two-part definition for serialism, the first of which is not strikingly different from her definition for serial technique. But the second part of the definition is unique in one small detail: serialism is the “principle of musical thought by a series (or multiple series) [*seriyami*].”<sup>78</sup> While she does not directly discuss her use of the plural form of series here, it is clear that she is referring to two different ideas. First, she is allowing for the inclusion of total serialism, in which there may be multiple series governing multiple musical parameters. Her own example, reprinted here as Figure 8, shows the twelve-tone pitch series, the twelve-unit durational series, the five-unit dynamic series, and the five-unit articulation series from Olivier Messiaen's *Île de feu* (1949). Secondly, by using the phrase “multiple series” here, she is allowing (or, at least, not prohibiting) the use of two or more distinct series governing the *same* musical parameter.

The second chapter of Kurbatskaya's book provides insight into a uniquely Russian understanding of serial composition and, more generally, twelve-toneness. The fact that her work resonates with that of the prominent Russian theorist Yuri Kholopov, under whose influence it

<sup>77</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 40.

<sup>78</sup> Kurbatskaya, *Seriynaya muzika*, 40.

**FIGURE 9.** Volkonsky, *Musica Stricta* (Mvt. 1): form

was written, and the fact that its conceptual origins are based on composer Edison Denisov's writings, indicates that Kurbatskaya's point of view is not dismissible as idiosyncratic or invalid.

It seems fitting that the first Russian book on serialism should describe the topic in ways at least somewhat different from the "strict" descriptions of early Western writings: from its earliest days, the Russian approach to serial composition was notably different from Schoenbergian ideals. Composed after Stalin's death, Andrey Volkonsky's *Musica Stricta* (1956–57) is generally accepted as the first piece of Soviet serial music. Although the focus of the present article prohibits a thorough analysis of this piece, I will offer a few examples from the first movement as a way of conclusion.<sup>79</sup>

In Volkonsky's first movement, the A–B–A' form (see the diagram of Figure 9) can be interpreted as arising from a conflict between two of Kurbatskaya's categories of twelve-toneness: the technique of tonal centers and the technique of twelve-tone rows. The A and A' sections of the first movement are saturated with different forms of set class 4-5, [0126]: literally, every note within these two sections can be explained by set-class membership, with the exception of a single E $\flat$  in the final chord of m. 13.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the different forms of 4-5 are actu-

<sup>79</sup> The analysis to follow will *not* be a "Kurbatskayan" analysis (if such a thing even exists). Kurbatskaya does not propose her terminology as an analytical apparatus, but rather as preliminary definitions prior to the rest of her book's largely Western and hemitonic analysis. My goal here is not to show how Kurbatskaya might analyze this piece, but rather to show how at least two of her terms might be useful for Western theorists studying this music.

<sup>80</sup> This note *could* be a misprint. As it is, it forms [0136] with the other notes of the chord. However, were this note an E $\sharp$ , rather than E $\flat$ , it would form [0126].

**FIGURE 10.** Volkonsky, *Musica Stricta* (Mvt. 1): mm 1–9

ally all transpositions of the unordered pitch-class set presented in m. 1, {0128}. It is this {0128} tetrachord that functions as the “tonal center” of these two sections, and, as Kurbatskaya’s definition requires, “the entire musical fabric is worked out by its regular repetitions in specific interval relationships.”<sup>81</sup> The opening nine measures of the movement are shown in Figure 10, with the initial {0128} labeled as  $x$ , and all other occurrences of 4-5 labeled as transpositions of  $x$ . Over the course of the two A sections (mm. 1–16, mm. 31–35), Volkonsky uses eleven of the twelve possible transpositions of  $x$ ;  $T_1(x)$  is the only transposition that is never used.

The B section (mm. 17–30) begins with more transformations of 4–5, but gradually, that set class loses hold of the pitch structure. The set-class structure of the B section is much less consistent, and is dominated by a seemingly freer interaction between trichords, highlighting 3-3, [014]. Figure 11 shows this interplay of trichords in mm. 21–22. Throughout this section, the use of melodic aggregates appears to be the primary organizing force. As Figure 12 shows, the first

<sup>81</sup> Kurbatskaya *Seriynaya muzika*, 33.

FIGURE 11. Volkonsky, *Musica Stricta* (Mvt. I): mm 21–22

FIGURE 12. Volkonsky, *Musica Stricta* (Mvt. I): mm 19–20

move away from the transpositions of  $x$  comes in m. 20, where a [0134] is sandwiched between  $T_3(x)$  and  $T_0(x)$ . Here, the [0134] represents the complementary pitch classes to the combined  $\{0123458E\}$  of  $T_3(x)$  and  $T_0(x)$ .<sup>82</sup> By adding this [0134], Volkonsky effectively unites two transformations of  $x$  into a single twelve-tone row. As such, it is possible to interpret this melodic line as representing a transition between the use of the technique of tonal centers to the technique of twelve-tone rows. From this point until the end of the B section, each measure contains one or two complete rows.<sup>83</sup>

Volkonsky's use of the technique creates no fewer than fourteen different rows, but none of these rows are repeated in this movement, nor in any of the other three movements of *Musica*

<sup>82</sup> As indicated by the interval-class vector of 4-5, [210111],  $T_3$  (along with  $T_9$ ) is the only transposition level that can be applied to  $x$  without resulting in any pitch-class duplication.

<sup>83</sup> There are four exceptions, which occur in mm. 21, 25, 26, and 30. All of these involve the doubling or repetition of a single pitch class and the omission of another.

*Stricta*. He appears to be using the technique of twelve-tone rows (in exactly the manner Kurbatskaya describes) in order to freely generate a wide variety of musical material, in contrast with the method of transpositions of a single “tonal center.” Despite these trespasses, Volkonsky believed that he was writing an orthodox twelve-tone composition.<sup>84</sup> While this suggests that his understanding of Schoenbergian/Webernian serialism was incomplete or even incorrect, his influence on his fellow students at the Moscow Conservatory, and on future generations of Soviet composers, has in some ways formed a distinctly Russian brand of serial composition. While it might be convenient for Western theorists to dismiss Volkonsky’s serial “missteps” as the uncertain efforts of a young composer, the case is not always so clear.<sup>85</sup> In this light, Kurbatskaya’s twelve categories of twelve-toneness permit us to view Volkonsky’s varying compositional decisions through a lens that allows for a finer distinction between differing degrees of serial-ness, rather than being forced to decide whether the piece *is* or *is not* serial.

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<sup>84</sup> Schmelz, “Andrey Volkonsky,” 171.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph Straus represents at least one Western theorist who would probably not categorize Volkonsky’s non-Schoenbergian approach to serial composition as a deviation from an “orthodox” practice. In fact, he addresses what he calls the “Myth of Serial Orthodoxy” by discussing the notable absence of an “identifiable mainstream” of serial composition in American and European music. See Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 177–180.

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## ABSTRACT

Published in Moscow in 1996, Svetlana Kurbatskaya's book *Serial Music: Questions of History, Theory, Aesthetics* (*Seriynaya muzika: voprosi istorii, teorii, estetiki*) carries the interesting distinction of being the first Russian-language monograph devoted entirely to the study of serial music. In the second chapter, Kurbatskaya defines twelve different categories of what she calls "twelve-toneness" (*dvenadtsatitonovost'*). Considering this source alongside the Russian *Musical Encyclopedic Dictionary* (*Muzikal'niy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*), which includes different definitions for a number of terms that Western readers would generally consider to be essentially synonymous (i.e., serial music, serial technique, dodecaphony, twelve-tone music), one can begin to accept the possibility that Russian theorists might be more restrictive in their definitions than their Western counterparts.

Despite its historical importance, Kurbatskaya's book has remained virtually unexplored in English-language scholarship (owing both to the book's language and relative inaccessibility in the United States). The present article aims first to summarize the state of Russian writings on serialism prior to the publication of Kurbatskaya's book, and second to provide a thorough discussion of the second chapter of the book, which introduces twelve categories of "twelve-toneness."

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zachary Cairns received his Ph.D. in Music Theory from the Eastman School of Music in 2010. His research interests include the serial music of Russian composer Edison Denisov, the avant-garde music of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union in general, and theories of metrical dissonance and phrase rhythm in tonal music. He has presented papers at the Society for Music Theory, the Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic, Music Theory Society of New York State, and the International Conference on Music in Russia and the Soviet Union (Durham, England, 2011). He is Assistant Professor of Music Theory at the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

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